

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 08160

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FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: UR, US
SUBJECT: SOVIET/AMERICAN RELATIONS

1. THE FOLLOWING IS A REPORT OF APRIL 17 LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH ARBATOV GIVEN ME IN CONFIDENCE BY CANADIAN AMBASSADOR FORD:

A. AT LUNCH AT RESIDENCE ON APRIL 17 I TRIED TO DRAW OUT ARBATOV ON HIS READING OF STATUS OF SOVIET/AMERICAN RELATIONS ON EVE OF THE VANCE VISIT APRIL 19. INEVITABLY MANY OF THE VIEWS REITERATED THOSE CONTAINED IN ARBATOV'S MARCH 28 PRAVDA ARTICLE BUT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF INTERESTING COMMENTS AND EMBELLISHMENTS.

B. FROM HIS REMARKS IT WAS CLEAR THAT ARBATOV REMAINS PERPLEXED BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND CONCERNED ABOUT ITS INABILITY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH CONGRESS. IN ADDITION HE DEPLORES CONTINUING STRAINED STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BUT INSISTS THAT FAULT LIES ENTIRELY WITH AMERICANS AND THAT SOVS HAVE DONE ALL THEY CAN TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR GOOD INTENTIONS AND SINCERE DESIRE FOR
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VASTLY IMPROVED RELATIONS. INDEED ON THIS SCORE ARBATOV WENT TO CONSIDERABLE PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT SOVIET REGIME HAD GONE TO EXTRAORDINARY LENGTHS TO EXHIBIT PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING IN DEALING WITH A NEW AND INEXPERIENCED ADMINISTRATION IN A NATION WHICH ONLY RECENTLY HAD EMERGED FROM THE TRAUMAS OF VIETNAM AND WATERGATE. NEVERTHELESS PATIENCE WEARS THIN AND,

ACCORDING TO ARBATOV, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE USA NOW TAKE CONCRETE INITIATIVES IN SEEKING BETTER AND CLOSER RELATIONS.

C. IN A RELATED DISCUSSION ON THE ATMOSPHERICS SURROUNDING BILATERAL ISSUES, ARBATOV REFERRED TO A CONVERSATION WITH HAMILTON JORDAN WHICH REPORTEDLY TOOK PLACE DURING THE RECENT SOVIET PARLIAMENTARY VISIT TO THE USA. ACCORDING TO ARBATOV, BOTH MEN AGREED THAT AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION CONTINUED TO FAVOUR DETENTE AND THE PURSUIT OF CLOSER BILATERAL RELATIONS AND THAT THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE TERMS IN THIS RESPECT SINCE THE KISSINGER ERA. WHAT HAD CHANGED WERE CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES AND IT WAS THESE THAT WERE OUT-OF-STEP WITH GENERAL OPINIONS AND LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SOURING OF SOVIET/AMERICAN RELATIONS. (ARBATOV INDICATED THIS WAS VERY EVIDENT DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION'S DISCUSSIONS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS QUOTE FRANK AND TOUGH UNQUOTE.) ARBATOV WAS NOT/NOT SANGUINE ABOUT A CHANGE IN ATTITUDES BEFORE ELECTIONS PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S CHEQUERED ABILITY TO INFLUENCE AND CONTROL CAPITOL HILL.

D. ON THE FORTHCOMING VANCE VISIT, ARBATOV ADMITTED GUARDED OPTIMISM PROVIDING VANCE HAD MEANINGFUL CONCESSIONS ON SALT ISSUES IN MIND. HE DID NOT/NOT KNOW WHETHER

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THIS WAS IN FACT THE CASE. FURTHERMORE, WHEN QUESTIONED HE INDICATED THAT THERE WAS NO/NO REASON NOR/NOR NEED FOR USSR TO RESPOND IN KING. IT WAS THE USA WHICH HAD EARLIER RENEGED ON SOME OF THE UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED AT VLADIVOSTOCK, IT WAS THE USA WHICH NOW HAD TO INTRODUCE CONCESSIONS AND, IN THE ABSENCE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT, IT WOULD BE THE USA WHICH WOULD BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILURE TO REACH A SALT II AGREEMENT. THUS THE BALL WAS IN THE AMERICAN COURT AND VANCE WAS THE NEXT PLAYER.

E. ON QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARBATOV EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE GAINED FROM AMERICAN BADGERING ON THE ISSUE. THE USSR WOULD NOT/NOT BE INFLUENCED BY NOR/NOR CAPITULATE TO CRITICISM; RATHER IT WOULD INCREASE SOVIET DETERMINATION TO PURSUE ITS OWN COURSE IN SUCH MATTERS. THE SOONER THIS WAS RECOGNIZED THE MORE FRUITFUL IT WOULD BE FOR ALL CONCERNED. IF THERE WAS A FLAW IN HIS PRESENTATION ON THIS SCORE, IT WAS THAT WITHOUT NAMING THEM, HE CAST THE SUBJECT IN TERMS OF INDIVIDUAL CASES LEAVING AN UNCERTAIN VACUUM SURROUNDING THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN AND WESTERN PRESSURE ON SUCH GENERAL QUESTIONS AS FAMILY REUNIFICATION AND JEWISH EMIGRATION.

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F. ALTHOUGH I RAISED QUESTION OF INFLUENCE OF OTHER MATTERS, SUCH AS DISSIDENCE AND SOV INTERFERENCE IN AFRICA, ON AMERICAN PERCEPTION OF SOV POLICY, HE DISMISSED THIS AS SIMPLY A DEVICE TO GIVE CREDENCE TO QUOTE LINKAGE UNQUOTE POLICY. I SAID I THOUGHT SOVS WERE MAKING A MISTAKE NOT/ NOT TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THESE MATTERS, AND ABOVE ALL SOV ARMS BUILD-UP IN FORMING AMERICAN PUBLIC AND

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CONGRESSIONAL OPINION. HE SIMPLY REPLIED THAT USA KNEW THAT ON MILITARY FRONT USSR AIMED AT PARITY NOT/NOT MILITARY SUPPERIORITY.

G. ON OTHER QUESTIONS ARBATOV EITHER REPEATED THE VIEWS CONTAINED IN HIS MARCH 28 PRAVDA ARTICLE OR REITERATED WELL KNOWN SOVIET POSITIONS.

H. AS AN ELOQUENT, KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVER OF THE AMERICAN SCENE, ARBATOV SPOKE WITH CONFIDENCE AND WITHOUT EMOTION OR RANCOUR. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT HE IS DISAPPOINTED AND PERPLEXED BY AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE. MANY OF HIS VIEWS REFLECTED THE SAME UNCERTAINTY THAT CHARACTERIZED HIS PRAVDA ARTICLE OF AUGUST 3 WHICH FORMED FIRST DEFINITIVE SOVIET STATE-
MENT ON CARTER ADMIN. SEVERAL OF THESE WERE REPEATED IN MARCH 28 ARTICLE AND AGAIN AT LUNCHEON TABLE. IT WAS CLEAR THAT ADDITIONAL MONTHS AND INCREASED KNOWLEDGE OF NEW ADMIN HAVE DONE LITTLE EITHER TO MODIFY ARBATOV'S VIEWS OR TO CREATE IMPROVED PROSPECTS FOR BETTER RELATIONS. FINALLY, ARBATOV LEFT US WITH IMPRESSION THAT

WITHOUT A MAJOR AMERICAN INITIATIVE OR CHANGE OF HEART,
THERE MAY BE LITTLE HOPE FOR APPRECIABLE FORWARD MOVE-
MENT DURING PRES. CARTER'S FIRST TERM. FORD TOON
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